

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic ...' *James Connolly*

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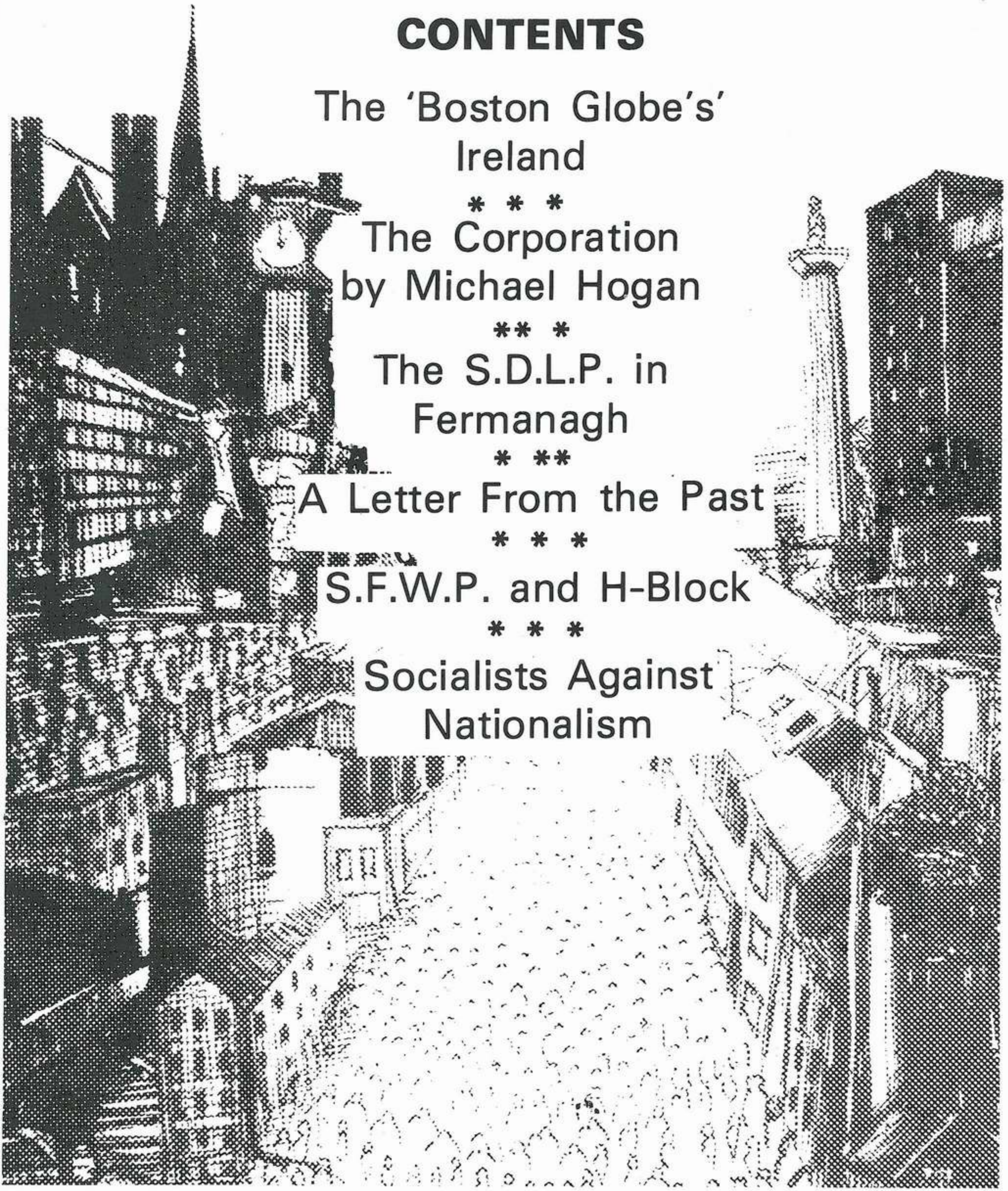
A Letter From the Past

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* * *

Socialists Against
Nationalism



A LETTER FROM THE PAST

**SUTTON'S COAL OFFICE, Mount Kenneth Quay,
Limerick. Sepr. 23 1904.**

Dear Sir,
Referring to our conversation on the telephone to-day, I must say I was rather surprised at your question asking whether a large number of men who had been employed by Bannatynes discharging Grain Steamers had to go into the Union on the introduction of Grain Elevators by that Firm into Limerick, and have been there ever since.

No such state of things ever existed here. It is quite true when this machinery arrived in port, the men - about 150 to 200 - got up a demonstration, and marched in a body over to the Union, were admitted, and remained there for the night, but the next morning they all cleared out, and were never seen there since.

To verify this statement I went over to the Union to-day and was informed in the Master's Office that what I stated above is exactly what occurred. About 150 to 200 men sought admission in a body to the Union, were admitted, but the next morning they all left and never returned.

This of course was nothing more than a demonstration on the part of the men, probably to enlist sympathy with them in what they considered was a grievance. But let me tell you what is the result of the introduction of these grain suckers into Limerick. I have been told by an old employee of Bannatynes's Firm, that their imports have more than doubled since this machinery was introduced, and that their trade is increasing daily, although the population of the country is unfortunately decreasing.

I have also been told by him that they employ far more hands now, than they ever did previous to the advent of the Suckers, and that they possibly could not carry on their trade at present without this machinery.

It is true he said that some of these men do not earn as much money as they did when the steamers were worked by hand, but then he says their work is not half as hard now as it was then, and their earnings go quite as far with them, for with the hard work they had to perform before, they drank the money almost as fast as they earned it.

He says no four men could keep tugging at a handwinch from morning till night, especially in large deep steamers. The men got completely worn out towards night at his unhuman work, and can only stick a few days a week at it.

There are no men ... quays of Limerick who would or could work handwinches at the present day. They simply would not do it. Steam is everywhere used.

The men here too are not slow to see that they are in competition with Dublin, Cork and Waterford, and they quite recognise that a couple of pence a ton would be the means of diverting say a cargo of coal from their port, and so they endeavour to keep pace with the times, and do things as expeditiously, and economically as possible in order to keep the trade at home.

Bannatynes can now discharge a five-thousand ton steamer in five days. In the old order of things it used to take a month and very many owners would not send their steamers to Limerick at all. It is not hard to see the enormous advantage gained by a firm like Bannatynes in this way. Fancy a big steamer lying at the quays here for a month instead of five days, and think of the enormous reduction in the freight this quick dispatch brings about.

The fact of the matter is that the tremendous competition in American and English flour so largely imported into this country compelled the Bannatynes to introduce this machinery or close down their mills, as has happened in the case of many mills all over the country.

It is well for Limerick there are such people as the Bannatynes there, who are able to introduce such modern machinery as they have lately done into all their mills; spending thousands of pounds on it for otherwise the milling industry would simply be crushed out by the keen competition I have

referred to, giving the Americans a monopoly of the trade of Ireland, and giving them the chance perhaps of raising the poor man's loaf as high as they may wish to put it.

It may not be generally known, but I am assured it is a fact that America, with the enormous quantity of offals, such as bran, Pollard, tailings etc., at her disposal taken from flour sent this and other countries, is crippling the Bacon Curing Industry of this country. She keeps all the offals at home, feeds her own pigs cheaply with them, and so has a magnificent Bacon Curing Industry. We in Ireland have very little offals, because the quantity of grain milled by us is insignificant. Offals are consequently dear, and with small prices for Pigs, farmers cannot buy them. Of course the small prices obtained is due to American competition in the Bacon line. In Limerick the Bacon Curing Industry is not all as healthy as it used to be.

It would be well therefore if we had many more firms in the country like Bannatynes, with their modern machinery enabling them to compete with any country, we would have more industries, more work, and more people.

Yours obediently,
Geo. Goodwin.

Sir. A. Sutton,
Messrs. Sutton's Ltd.,
CORK.

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The SDLP does it again

For the second time in 6 months, the SDLP has refused to fight the IRA in a Fermanagh-South Tyrone by-election. For the second time in 6 months, southern politicians and media-men are making what excuses for them that they can. They blame — you've guessed it — Britain; they blame the atmosphere created by the hunger strikes; they blame anything and anybody but the SDLP.

Amongst southern opinion makers, it is not considered cricket to query the doings of the SDLP, much less have the bad grace to criticise them. But it is high time that they were criticised. Southern indulgence of the SDLP's stampede towards extreme nationalism has encouraged their reckless assumption that the south will be willing — and able — to bail them out after they burn all their boats with regard to the Protestant population and things get too hot for them to handle alone.

DECLINE OF THE SDLP

The SDLP is in decline. They themselves and their southern apologists blame this on the "political vacuum" in the North. This is nonsense. The so-called vacuum has not led to the UDA and UVF taking over the Protestant population and the eclipse of loyalist politicians. It is the limitation of the SDLP's function as constitutional nationalists which is responsible for their demise.

The party was the early beneficiary of the IRA campaign. All sorts of concessions were granted to the SDLP in an unrealistic attempt to buy off the IRA; unrealistic in that the IRA were not interested in concessions but in Irish unity. What probably surprised the British was the fact that the SDLP turned out to have the same single-minded dedication to the same aim.

The SDLP have now shed all their masks. They have abandoned the principle of unity by consent and call for enforced

Irish unity. They want "political movement" — talks between the "sovereign governments" that will show the Prods who's boss and fix up a united Ireland. If the Protestants were not serious about their unionism, they might acquiesce in being manipulated towards an all Ireland state. But they are serious. The only way to achieve Irish unity is through a nasty ugly bloody war.

The SDLP could only remain dominant in the field of nationalist politics as long as they appeared able to deliver the goods (though in reality, the "goods" were won by IRA fire power, and merely channelled through the SDLP). But the "political movement" demanded by the SDLP is impossible. The limits of the SDLP's hypocritical manouvrings have been reached. That is why they are being eclipsed in the arena of nationalism by the Provisional IRA.

POLITICAL VACUUM

The real political vacuum is the one facing a large proportion of northern Catholics (a majority, if even the most recent polls are to be believed) who aren't particularly interested in risking a blood bath for the sake of uniting the old sod. The SDLP's problem is that the starkness of the current northern realities prevents them fudging the issues and must seriously undermine their credibility among such people.

Meanwhile, the last-minute intervention of the Republican clubs/the Workers' Party candidate, Tom Moore, further shows up the SDLP. It must be admitted that Fermanagh is infertile ground for anything but the most robust tribalism. Nonetheless, Tom Moore's candidature is to be welcomed if only to challenge the principle that the Provisionals can dictate who stands for election and who does not; a principle twice conceded by the erstwhile champions of "moderation", and even non-sectarianism.

TWO VIEWS

THE ATTITUDE(S) OF SINN FEIN THE WORKERS' PARTY TO H-BLOCK

Sinn Fein the Workers' Party needs to make up its mind whether it is Sinn Fein or The Workers' Party. There is an important issue to be sorted out within SFWP, and the radical element in the party is funking it. The issue is whether or not SFWP is to be an anti-partitionist organisation which takes part in the H-Block campaign and similar nationalist crusades.

MacGIOLLA'S VIEW

In a statement reported in *The Irish Times* (31/7/81) Tomas MacGiolla, president of SFWP said that "more than 12 months ago, his party had supported granting the five demands to all prisoners", but added "Mrs. Thatcher obviously takes pleasure out of seeing them die ...

"That (July 14th) statement from the prisoners themselves is clearly the blueprint for resolving the conflict. It did not emanate from the Provos or the H-Block Committee. (Is MacGiolla quite sure about these distinctions?). It was a clear invitation to the British Government to deal directly with the prisoners and had they done so with any element of goodwill, the matter could have been resolved within the following week" said Mr. MacGilla.

He went on: "However, goodwill is something we have never got from the British Government, and I suppose it is not to be expected in this case either, especially from Mrs. Thatcher, who has no goodwill even for the British working class" ... "Surely it is not necessary that more prisoners die just to prove how

brutally intransigent Mrs. Thatcher can be?"

ANOTHER VIEW

In the May issue of *Workers' Life*, there is a little piece about Fr. Denis Faul's H-Block propaganda ("That's Life). The author is evidently one of the many SFWP members who are privately anti-nationalist. He expressed shock and horror at the nature of Fr. Faul's propaganda, and says that there ought to be some kind of Prevention of Incitement to Hatred Act in Northern Ireland to stop him producing such "racialist rubbish". Wouldn't it be better to start at home? Could such an Act be put into force in 30 Gardiner Place to stop MacGiolla producing the likes of what is quoted above?

The candidature of SFWP's northern wing in the Fermanagh/South Tyrone by-election is undoubtedly motivated by the latter position, but while Tom Moore is trying to disrupt the united H-Block front, MacGiolla, the party's public spokesman, is rowing in behind it and must surely make the electorate wonder why Tom Moore is standing at all.

Apart from the passing genuflection to the British working-class, a cynical gesture to guard his flanks, MacGiolla's remarks above could easily have been copied from one of Fr. Faul's letters. How can the anti-nationalists within SFWP have any self-respect when they are prepared to be represented in public by this colourless replica of Arthur Griffith?

THE 'BOSTON GLOBE'S' IRELAND

We reprint this article from the "Boston Globe", written by Martin Nolan, the paper's chief editorial writer.

The General Post Office in Dublin still sells stamps, as it has since 1815. It is also a shrine to the Easter Rising of 1916, where a rebellion of poets and teachers eventually led to freedom for the Republic of Ireland from the British Empire.

In front of the G.P.O. on O'Connell Street, young volunteers for the Provisional wing of the Irish Republican Army distribute leaflets about H-Block, the section of Long Kesh prison in Northern Ireland where eight IRA men have starved themselves to death. Occasionally, demonstrators march through Dublin for the H-Block cause. The marches have grown since the death in May of the first H-Block hunger striker, Bobby Sands.

The election of Bobby Sands to the British Parliament was the first of three events that have altered politics in Ireland for this year and perhaps for years to come. The election of an IRA prisoner to the House of Commons in Westminster was designed to embarrass the British government and it did.

The second event was the fast and eventual death of Sands, which internationalized the IRA's H-Block issue. Marches, vigils and rallies highlighted the issue of British "intransigence". British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has all too willingly personified the issue. She has made intransigence her trademark and rejected compromises offered by churchmen or the Dublin government that would end the hunger strike. The Irish Prime Minister, Garret Fitzgerald, wants to end the hunger strike to break the influence of the IRA and has urged it to stop its campaign of violence in Northern Ireland and in border areas of the Republic.

The IRA wants "political status" for its prisoners, recognition that they are prisoners of war against England. The IRA believes that world opinion, specifically American opinion, will demand that Thatcher back down. One irony in the issue is that the IRA has "internationalized" the H-Block issue before it has "nationalized" itself, the issue is secondary to inflation and unemployment. More people demonstrate about H-Block in Brooklyn than do in Dublin. This fall, voters in Boston and San Francisco will vote on whether the British Army should leave Northern Ireland. No such referendum is planned for Cork and Galway.

The H-Block issue came home to Dublin July 18, when thousands of marchers, many from the north, paraded in front of the British Embassy in Dublin. Many began throwing stones at the police, who retaliated, beating many with nightsticks. As in many such confrontations, most of the older civilian populace have cheered the police. Many young people, however, have sided with the H-Block marchers. For a cause to march against, for a symbol of entrenched establishment, the British government of Margaret Thatcher offers a convenient target.

The IRA's propaganda coups have so emotionalized its cause that its aims are forgotten by new adherents. In a world where young people often demonstrate for universal peace, many have adopted an organization whose aim is subjugation by force of arms of both the British provincial government in Belfast and the Irish government in Dublin.

Even in the narrow issue of prisoner-of-war status, the IRA hardly qualifies as an "army". It takes a few prisoners of war, shooting many of its victims in the back after capture and interrogation. There are few honourable discharges from the IRA. If a member wishes to muster out, he is considered "an informer" and killed.

Unlike the heroes of 1916, men of erudition and vision, today's IRA members are mostly young, ill-educated, bred to poverty and oppression in Belfast slums with little to live for.

Their followers in the south of Ireland resemble young religious fanatics in America, cultists who speak in slogans of self-righteousness. However well-intentioned their zeal, de-programming would pose a greater threat than the British Army.

The Dublin government is whipsawed by the H-Block issue. Thatcher's intransigence means a continuation of the traumatic ritual of fasting, medical bulletins, grieving families and paramilitary ceremonies at graveside. One reliable estimate of the number of hunger strikers prepared to die is more than 70. Each death may receive progressively smaller headlines worldwide, but each death means continued turmoil and trauma in Ireland.

If the Dublin government can not "control" the IRA, which it cannot, then there is little to bargain about with political leaders in Northern Ireland. Whatever political concessions Dublin might make to Belfast - changing the Irish constitution to recognise political and religious pluralism, for instance - are obscured by the emotionalism of H-Block.

Fitzgerald's government, like many in Europe, is a coalition, merging one major party with a few splinter groups. Unlike other governments in Europe however, the coalition is based on emotional feelings about nationalism in the past, not on economic realities of the present. There are no liberals or conservatives as such in Ireland, there is no left or right.

The major political parties are called Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, stirring slogans from the rebellious past. From the standpoint of economic realities, it is as though the US Congress were divided between the Tippecanoes and the Teapot Domes.

Each new prime minister makes a ritualistic bow to the cause of Irish unity. Each fails to accomplish it. None raises the question whether all the bloodshed has been worth it. In Northern Ireland, since the current "troubles" began, 2137 people have been killed and 17,918 have been wounded, for two causes or slogans. One is that "all Ireland must be free". The other is that "Ulster must remain British".

The IRA and its opponents are both more symptom than cause of Ireland, a divided country that lives in the past. In north and south, too many retreat to the past not for principles of peace to live by, but for slogans of the strife to die by.

The Rev. Ian Paisley, a member of the British Parliament and a representative of the European Economic Community in Brussels, bellows at a visitor that his image has been distorted in the world press. "Do you think I could be elected and re-elected to office constantly if I were a bigot?" he thunders from his six-foot-four frame in the vestibule of the Martyrs' Memorial Free Presbyterian Church in Belfast.

Paisley preaches against "Popery" to his congregation weekly and in a recent Sunday prayer asked God "to visit Ulster with the fire of Thy righteous wrath to smite the Irish Republican Army and all those who support it". He resembles politicians of the old American South and not just because of his speaking style (acquired, along with his doctorate of divinity, at Bob Jones University). When Paisley says "Never" to the unification of Ireland, his followers believe that he will still be fighting for their cause even if it is a lost one. In urging continued union with Britain, he is more British than the Queen or, so to speak, holier than the Pope.

Whether Paisley is a bigot or not is less important than that he is a hard-working politician with more than a touch of pragmatism. He is also a fulltime pharisee, who scrutinizes the rubrics of church and state to avoid any cooperation with the Republic of Ireland or the Roman Catholic Church. He conspicuously shuns all political contact with the Dublin government. Paisley called the recent royal wedding in London "the

most important event in human history" (presumably because the Prince of Wales will keep Ulster British), but he spurned his own place of honor as an M.P. at the wedding and boycotted it because of the participation in St. Paul's ceremony by the Roman Catholic Cardinal, Basil Hume.

what the most important political figure in Northern Ireland does not condemn is as noteworthy as what he denounces. Paisley has not criticized a series of economic development programs undertaken by Cooperation North, a nonpolitical non-denominational effort to increase trade and tourism in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Its model is the European Economic Community to which both parts of Ireland belong.

Only a generation ago, the major partners in the Common Market, France and West Germany, were mired in centuries-old wars and grievances. The power of economic self-interest is such that at a recent summit meeting of the two countries, Helmut Schmidt and Francois Mitterrand had more to talk about than their former roles as Wehrmacht infantryman and Free French Resistance fighter. Neither mentioned Alsace-Lorraine, either.

Cooperation North is the brainchild of one of Ireland's most successful businessmen, Brendan O'Regan, who presided over the economic revival of Shannon Airport. In the early 1960s, when Shannon was a busy stopover for trans-Atlantic flights, its economic existence was threatened by direct jet flights to Europe. O'Regan was warned of a loss of 1,000 jobs. By developing industry and tourist enticements, Shannon has become a boom area, with 7000 jobs in factories and at the holy ground for American tourists, the duty-free shop at Shannon Airport.

In planning for electricity and natural gas lines and for joint ventures in tourism and trade, Cooperation North has achieved a greater de facto unity for Ireland than all the songs and speeches that have echoed in Irish history. "It is the European idea", says O'Regan "and narrowmindedness can not survive the European idea".

Cooperation North is not warmly greeted by the Dublin government because it is extra-governmental and because it does not make the ritualistic bow to Irish unity. "We neither promote the idea nor abandon it", says O'Regan. The organization's studies, by scholars from Belfast and Dublin, say that the business interests involved in its efforts are "co-operating as equals", without offending existing cultural traditions or political beliefs".

Cooperation North is a refreshing development for Ireland because it promotes Irishness without promoting nationalism. The ruling tragedies of Ireland are twin strains of virulent nationalism tinged with religious fervour and outbreaks of fanaticism. The political landscape of Ireland is, at the edges, beginning to resemble Iran.

In the center, however, are signs of hope. In Irish politics, one small breakthrough was made in Limerick by the election to Parliament of Jim Kemmy, 43, a socialist who won as an independent. He opposed existing laws against divorce and contraception and urged changing the constitution of the Republic of Ireland to remove the clauses defining the "national territory" as all of Ireland. These clauses are unacceptable to most political elements in Northern Ireland.

Kemmy's election is one small break in the united front of nationalist romance still preached and practised by the major political parties in Ireland. He reflects a weariness among at least a few Irishmen with sectarian violence, including self-inflicted violence. "The H-Block campaign is the past trying to intimidate the future", Kemmy said at a rally in Dublin of "Socialists Against Nationalism" that attracted 200 people, including more than a few IRA hecklers.

"The Troubles" in Ireland have dramatically drained the number of tourists, especially from England and America. The secretary of the Irish Hotels Federation, Kevin Barry, estimates a decline of more than \$400 million this year, a heavy economic blow for a nation of 3.5 million.

At Drumcliff in Sligo, between the Yeats Lounge and the Yeats Tavern, German and French tourists visit the grave of William Butler Yeats in the churchyard where his grandfather

once served as rector. In the background rises the starkly beautiful mountain, Ben Bulbin. Carved on the 1700-foot sheer side of the mountain in huge letters is "H-Block", referring to the prison in Northern Ireland, where IRA prisoners are starving themselves to death.

Yeats wrote in 1921 what has become almost a cliché about modern politics:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity.

That seems a fit epitaph for Ireland, but it is not. The centre is holding because for Ireland the centre is the future. Brendan O'Regan, one of Ireland's leading capitalists, and Jim Kemmy, one of the leading socialists, are united in looking at the future, not the past. They see the need for ignoring the sterile politics of nationalism. In Northern Ireland and the Republic, after all the bloodshed, some are beginning to see that constantly nourishing old grievances does not put bread on the table.

The physical beauty of Ireland creates an atavistic tug on its political conscience. History blends with poetry, with myth and magic, in a spell of constant romance. What few Irish in the south realise - and vice versa - is that Irish in the north share these central preoccupations. They divide on culture, on religion and on politics, but not on their feelings for the earth they inhabit, its fragility and its majesty. They are now both part of Europe, economically and politically, an awesome fact neither side has appreciated enough.

In Ireland, the important dispute is not north vs. south or Catholics vs Protestant, nor even violence vs. non-violence, for violence will sadly continue. In Dublin and Belfast, the important battle is for time, which both sides have stolen from their children. In Ireland, the true struggle is between those who will argue about its past or work for its future, a cause worth "all conviction" and "passionate intensity".

NEW DIRECTION

On one of the first real summer evenings of the year, with the bus strike still going on, some two hundred people recently crowded into and around a not-too-large room in the Central Hotel, Dublin. Almost half of them had to stand or squat, and some went away having failed to get nearer than ten feet to the entrance of the room. Socialists Against Nationalism organisers had made a major mistake; they had underestimated the numbers prepared to listen to speakers on "Irish Socialism: a New Direction".

The meeting, chaired by Dr. John de Courcy Ireland, featured Jim Kemmy TD as the main speaker, backed by John Minahane and Seamus Ratigan. The enthusiastic crowd heard the speakers denounce the pseudo-humanitarianism of the H-Block campaign, demand the deletion of the constitutional claim over Northern Ireland and urge Irish socialists to break with nationalism and seize the opportunities now opening up for them.

The Second heartening fact for Socialists Against Nationalism was the support of the vast majority of the attendance for these views, and the cool reception accorded to republican speeches from the floor.

The response to the meeting (and to SAN's H-Block pamphlet) and the inadequacy of the venue have impelled the SAN committee to start laying plans for a follow-up meeting. Details will be announced in a few weeks.

THE CORPORATION

PART THREE

FROM SHAWN-A-SCOOB

by Michael Hogan

The Priests

The Catholic mob, with saintly cry,
 Rushed to the business of salvation;
 Oh, what a blessing to live and die
 In a fanatical Catholic Nation.

Where slaves and bosthoons don't fear God
 Nor to their neighbours just nor civil;
 Yet, let a Soggarth give a nod,
 And off they scamper to the devil.

And for their belligerent zeal,
 They're just rewarded in proportion;
 Cold hovels, and a hungry meal,
 And squalid rags for their devotion.

The honest Englishman for sense
 Will never ask an knavish brother;
 But on their manhood's eminence
 They nobly stand and help each other.

While we, for shadowy trifles fight,
 Half-clad, half-fed, half-dead with plodding;
 They look at facts, and make them right,
 And quietly eat their beef and pudding.

Is it because we're Irish-born,
 And cut each other up in factions,
 That God will give us wine and corn,
 And bless our religious feuds and factions?

Oh, no—where religion's pure and right,
 Neighbourly love is its foundation;
 But when 'tis built on pelt and spite,
 A galling curse comes on the nation.

With too much ho nage you spoiled your priests,
 While God without your hearts was lonely,
 Until they treated you like poor beasts,
 Just made to carry burdens only.

In their concerns you're little known,
 About your cares they have no bother;
 Till for some purpose of their own,
 They set your murdering one another.

People may make a chance mistake
 Of fancied wealth to be partakers;
 But pets are dangerous things to make,
 For surely they'll deceive the makers.

Lift up your fellow creature high,
 Make him a beauty and a wonder;
 The more you lift the more he'll try
 With sly-shod foot to keep you under.

And so it was, and so 'twill be,
 Till god-like, manly wisdom rule ye;
 And till that wisdom makes you free,
 Knaves will continue to befool ye.

THE TIRVOE PLOT

Tirvoe became a synagogue
 Of canting knaves to prop the whigs;
 Election-strumpets sung in vogue,
 And Limerick danced the devil's jigs.
 Drunkenness, perjury, bribe and blood,
 With Satan's art were set afloat,
 To send to London a traitorous brood
 To cut our gasping country's throat.
 All the commandments that God gave,
 On Sinai, were kicked into snuff,
 To send to the House some spurious knave
 Like Russell or imbecile Puff
 Although the City sorely lost,
 At least the devil got his due,
 And he is grateful to the host
 That forms the Council of Tirvoe.
 Stupendous miracle—what a change
 To see Tirvoe a bishop's seat;
 A nursery where whiggery's mangle
 Is propagated for the state.
 There's not a plot to sink the slave,
 And make his life more base and banned;
 There's not a scheme to lift the knave,
 But in Tirvoe 'tis spun and planned.
 And tho' its hanging days are set,

Or turned aside like mountain rill;
 There's precious business done there yet,
 For tis corruption's acre still.
 'Twas in its reverend martial halls,
 The hero of the ass's car
 Cast his election cannon-balls
 And learned his rudiments of war.

'Twas there the infernal plot was made
 To drive Sir Peter from our town;
 They ruined Limerick's Prince of trade,
 And pulled the people's livings down.
 A thousand girls flung out of work,
 Thousands of moaths left without bread;
 Now let the rogues their shoulders shirk,
 And tell the devil to stay in bed.
 Tie him with dogmatical bands,
 Rein him with theological bridle;
 Else he'll give work to idle hands,
 And he'll find enough in Limerick idle.

Poor girls, it was a pleasant sight
 To see your legions every day;
 With your decent dresses and faces bright,
 Passing to work along the way.
 Beauty and modesty were yours,
 As thro' the streets you moved along;
 With your fair cheeks red as July flowers,
 And your voices sweet as the sky-bird's song.
 But now you must leave friends and home,
 To shun the accursed poor-house dread;
 To foreign towns for work to roam,
 To die in want or beg for bread.
 Like uprooted plants you're cast,
 Perhaps to fall in the ways of shame.
 Oh! how will they bear the glance of God,
 Who wrought such evil religion's name?

A FIRM OF SHARKS

A slave-driving firm¹ of bigots and knaves
 Without principle, mercy, or honuor's high trust;
 As cold as the clods on their ancestors' graves,
 And as rotten in heart as their ancestors' dust.

Without one single virtue or ray to redeem
 Their souls that are dark as the life of a gnome;
 Sires, sons, brothers, uncles—they're all the cold same;
 From Johnny² the pedlar to "Twopenny Thom."³

Who that ever yet hoped in them was not deceived?
 Who that ever yet toiled for them was not despised?
 While their ears to the cry of distressed or bereaved,
 Are as deaf as flint crags by the bleak winds advised.

In feeling as treacherous and keen as a knife,
 In commerce life foxes that bore through the earth;
 And would barter the honour and manhood of life
 For a base-born fortune of beggarly worth.

Like Argus, each knave has a hundred eyes
 To watch the pale toiler half paid and heart sore;
 With a vulture souled staff of detectives and spies,
 To work the last drop of blood-sweat from the poor.*

When the merchants around them of late had agreed
 To give the poor workmen more competent pay;
 Those blue sharks of justice like this took no heed,
 But would turn every man for one shilling away.

Were it not for those rivals so strong and secure,
 Who on all sides around them, with fear they behold;
 They'd sell their mixed bread-stuffs as dear to the poor,
 As the rascally Jews sell the dust of their gold.

The fishes may swim and the worms may crawl,
 And the birds from their nests to the skies sally forth;
 But in this den there's nothing of feeling at all,
 For they're all dead and damned while they're walking
 on earth.

Ah, many a heart breaking long night and day,
 Have I slaved for this merciless firm of Sharks;
 Yet, with all my hard times of life-sweat and bad pay,
 Was chased by the lies of their scoundrelly clerks.

But I did not regret to be free from the den,
 Of those monstrous monopolists of corn and meal;
 And I prayed for the day, 'fore the faces of men,
 To repay their bad deeds with one slash of my flail.

I agree with the Sassanach satrap who said
 That this Isle should be plunged under Neptune's salt
 waves

To sweep from its bosom both living and dead,
 Its base brood of mountebanks, tyrants and slaves.

The few honest fellows that's in it may swim,
 'Till the tide from its mission retires to the main;
 Then who knows but in spirit, in action, and limb,
 We may have a true race of true manhood again.

1. John Norris Russell & Sons, corn, meal and flour merchants, Michael Hogan's first employers. 2. John Norris Russell (father). 3. Thompson Russell, Commissioner of the Peace for County Limerick (son). *I was a witness to one of those brutal officials laughing heartily when he saw the sweat oozing in red drops from the frame of a poor labourer who had been forced to do the work of two men. The same often happened to myself. No justice, mercy, or humanity belong to those wretches. (Note by Michael Hogan.)

BLANEY AND THE BLANKET MEN

A LOOK AT BLANEY'S FADING HOPES OF A BREAKTHROUGH FOR INDEPENDENT FIANNA FAIL

Generally, it is rose-coloured spectacles that are said to obscure one's view of the real world. The bulk of the southern media, however, prefer their spectacles a striking emerald hue. According to these commentators, the most outstanding aspect of the general election was the strong showing of the H-Block candidates, as if to suggest that the southern electorate had just given a fresh mandate to nationalism. They omitted to point up the following facts to the contrary:

- * That the Republican Party (Fianna Fail) actually lost the election;
- * That top Provo-pusher within Fianna Fail, Sile de Valera, lost her seat;
- * That given the election of 4 IRA men in 1957, the electoral success of only two IRA men at a time when young Irishmen on hunger strike are dying in a British jail must be considered a rebuff, and an indication of a longterm underlying decline of old-style republicanism;
- * That a major urban centre in the Republic returned a declared anti-nationalist deputy in SAN activist Jim Kemmy of Limerick.

BLANEY GETS IT WRONG

Similarly, the electoral fortunes of Neil Blaney serve to underline the general decline of traditional nationalism. In the run-up to the election, Blaney claimed that his party, Independent Fianna Fail, would hold the balance of power in the new Dail. This prediction received a swift setback when the Provos (disguised this time as the National H-Block/Armagh Committee) fielded their own candidates. Five of Blaneys seven candidates withdrew leaving Independent Fianna Fail fighting for two seats: Blaney himself in Donegal North East and his protege, Pat Kelly in the Donegal South West constituency For Independent Fianna Fail, read "Brits Out".

DOHERTY'S DEATH

The following statement by Jim Kemmy, TD, on the death of the hunger-striker TD Kieran Doherty was published in full in the **Cork Examiner** (6/8/81). He was also interviewed about it on RTE Radio News at 1.30 on the same date. We reprint it for readers who may not have seen it.

"Kieran Doherty, TD, died for the enforcement of Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's Constitution. His fellow TDs must face the issue raised by his death. We must get rid of the constitutional claim over Northern Ireland before it does further damage in Northern Ireland and debases our own politics even more. We have no right to continue threatening the Northern majority and directing the minority down a blind alley.

"After Mr. Haughey's first meeting with Mrs. Thatcher in May 1980, Dr. Garret FitzGerald proposed in Dail Eireann that Articles 2 and 3 should be repealed. If that had been done, the hunger-strikes would never have begun. The H-Block prisoners would have had no illusions that they could stampede the Dail behind them. If Dr. FitzGerald now speaks and acts in the spirit of the proposal he made a year ago, he may save further lives, both of the hunger-strikers and of the ordinary victims of violence".

BLANEY AND DONEGAL

According to the media, Donegal and support for Neil Blaney are synonymous. This, of course, is not the case. Blaney has never made a break-through in Donegal South West, the most populous of the two Donegal constituencies. This is the constituency of old Dail names like Michael Og MacFadden, Pa O'Donnell and more recently, of Cormac Breslin and Joe Brennan. Stretching westwards from the Border, it includes growing towns and villages like Bundoran, Ballyshannon, Donegal Town and Killybegs. Blaney has nurtured this constituency for a decade with clinics and cavalcades. Yet electorally, he has nothing to show for it. In two local elections, the whole expanse of South West Donegal has never given his candidates more than a couple of hundred votes.

This time round, not having to campaign outside the county, Blaney went all out. But to no avail. His man in South Donegal, Pat Kelly, failed to take a seat.

DONEGAL NORTH EAST

For Blaney, the bitter disappointment of Donegal South West was hardly assuaged by his personal performance in Donegal North East. In this three-seater, which is the traditional Blaney base, he was pushed into second place by Fine Gael's Paddy Harte, while Fianna Fail's Hugh Conaghan showed a big increase in his first preference. Harte's eleven thousand or so votes to his own eight thousand must have been a particularly bitter pill for Blaney to swallow. As the results continued to come in and the swing to Harte and Conaghan became more apparent, shivers went down the collective spine of the Blaney machine. The party that started off hoping to hold the balance of power in the Dail now feared that Harte might be made Ceann Comhairle, and next time round, in a two-seater constituency, Blaney might not retain his **own** seat.

THE BALANCE OF POWER

And when the twenty-third Dail assembled, Blaney, the independent nationalist, builder of the urban slum of Ballymun, who as deputy for thirty-three years stood silent over the mass emigration of youth from the rural slums of Donegal to earn a living in England and Scotland, berated the British Government with cliches and claptrap, and the elusive balance of power? In the main, it was held by a small group of socialist deputies who are opposed to everything the at Neil Blaney stands for.

CLIMBDOWN

"A number of our comrades beginning today with Bobby Sands will hunger strike to the death unless the British Government abandons its criminalisation policy and meets our demands for political status".

— Prisoners' Statement: **Irish Times** 2/3/1981.

"The Prisoners never at any time demanded political status".
— C.J. Haughey. RTE Radio 5/7/81.

Clearly, if a settlement of the H-Block issue is to involve an IRA climbdown on political status, as the prisoners' 4th of July statement implies, Mr. Haughey is anxious that they should not lose face in the process.

However, the statements of the prisoners and the national H-Block/Armagh Committee on the issue are too well known and too easily documented for Haughey's face-saving exercise to cut much ice anywhere.